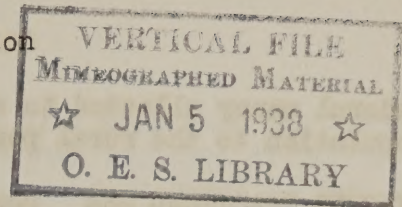


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United States Department of Agriculture
Extension Service
Division of Cooperative Extension

THE COOPERATIVE AGRICULTURAL
EXTENSION SERVICE



WHAT IT IS The Cooperative Agricultural Extension Service is an organization of county, State, and National workers engaged in helping rural people to apply scientific facts to meet their problems in farming and home making. It is called a cooperative service because the State agricultural colleges, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the counties that wish to participate, join together in financing it and in furnishing educational material for its use.

WHY IT WAS CREATED For a number of years our State agricultural experiment stations and National Department of Agriculture engaged in search for knowledge to improve agriculture, but had to depend on bulletins and books to convey the information to the people on the farms who had need of it. Many times this information traveled slowly, one authority stating that 25 years elapsed before an agricultural fact established by research was put into practical use on the farms.

HOW IT WAS CREATED To speed up this process, farmers and those interested in the success of farming asked Congress to provide a way for all farmers to be kept in closer touch with progress in their line of business. Several agricultural colleges and the Department of Agriculture had carried on various forms of extension work in counties here and there for several years before a coordinated plan was discussed in Congress. These experiences were determining factors in the action of our National Legislature. After considering several plans, Congress enacted what is known as the Smith-Lever Act, effective July 1, 1914. Under this act and by subsequent agreement between the agricultural colleges and the United States Department of Agriculture, practically all agricultural extension work was grouped in one organization and is now cooperatively financed and administered. Most subsequent acts relating to agricultural extension work are similar in plan to the Smith-Lever Act.

COST IS BORNE COOPERATIVELY The expense of carrying on agricultural extension work in the States and Territories is shared by the National Government, the States, the Territories, and counties that participate in the work. During the year ending June 30, 1936, the cooperative cost was \$28,299,905.64.

Of the total, 57.2 percent (\$16,190,624) was provided by the National Government; 18.5 percent (\$5,220,033) from State funds; 20.8 percent (\$5,887,700) from county funds; and the remainder, 3.5 percent (\$1,001,547) was supplied by local organizations and individuals. All county appropriations are expended within the county making the contribution. This money pays a part or all of the local extension agents' salaries and expenses incident to the county extension program.

A part of the Federal money is available to States and counties only when it is matched by similar State appropriations. The proportion of

Federal money allotted to a State is determined by the ratio of the State's rural population to the rural population of the United States.

TEACHES PRACTICAL USE OF RESEARCH FACTS Cooperative extension agents are teachers. Their work, described in the Smith-Lever Act, is "to give instructions and practical demonstrations in agriculture and home economics to persons not attending college." One of the methods of instruction used in the early extension work which both extension agents and farmers valued highly, was known as the farm demonstration.

THE FARM DEMONSTRATION The farm demonstration, a trying-out process, has remained one of the unique characteristics of cooperative extension work. Certain improved methods are selected for demonstration by the county extension agent and a council or representative group of the farmers of the county. Then volunteers who live in various parts of the county undertake to demonstrate one of the suggested methods on their own farms. That is, they agree to follow the recommendations as nearly as they can, to keep a check on the advantages or disadvantages this method may have over the old method, and also to give the rest of the farmers in the county an opportunity to see how well the new method works under ordinary farm conditions. A similar plan is followed in demonstrating new and improved methods of homemaking.

COUNTY PROGRAMS OF WORK All the extension activities in a county are parts of a plan carefully worked out by agents and farm people together.

The county extension agent knows the agriculture of his county and the information available in the State agricultural college and the United States Department of Agriculture that will apply to local conditions. County extension agent and farmers study local conditions and problems together and select the measures that seem best suited to their county, combining these measures into a program or plan of work for the year, or for several years, since many changes in farming and home making must be made slowly.

Most of the problems relate to producing economically, preventing livestock and crop loss from disease or pest, producing to meet market demands, and maintaining a satisfying and reasonably secure standard of living.

FARM PEOPLE HELP WITH PROGRAM The strength of the Extension Service lies in the number of farmers and farm women throughout the country who are giving voluntarily of their time and effort to help to carry out the program of extension work in their communities. Nearly 368,000 men and women are serving each year as volunteer local leaders in extension work among their neighbors. Over 115,000 are giving a like service among the farm boys and girls in their communities.

DESIGNATIONS OF EXTENSION WORKERS The man who is employed in a county to assist the farmers with their agricultural problems is called the county agricultural extension agent. The women who assist the farm women of the county with their homemaking problems is called the county home demonstration agent.

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Although both of these agents may also work with the rural young people of the county, the larger counties have sometimes employed either an assistant agent or an agent designated as the county club agent to carry on the work with farm boys and girls known as 4-H club work.

Southern counties with a large number of Negro farmers frequently also have Negro agents who serve the farmers of their race.

Each State participating in cooperative extension work has a State director of extension located at the State agricultural college. The director is assisted by subject-matter specialists and supervisors.

In the United States Department of Agriculture there are a director of extension work, assistant directors, and other supervisory and subject-matter workers.

NUMBER OF AGENTS There are 2,898 county agricultural extension agents serving agricultural counties. Some agents serve more than one county. There are 1,053 counties that also have assistant or club agents. And 234 counties in the South also have Negro farm agents.

There are 1,632 county home demonstration agents and 162 assistant home demonstration agents. In addition, 177 counties have Negro women agents.

Administrative and subject-matter workers, located at the State agricultural colleges, number about 2,080. There are approximately 70 members of the cooperative extension staff in the Department of Agriculture.

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